

Message Text

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ACTION PM-07

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01

PA-03 PRS-01 DRC-01 /035 W

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R 100735Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1807

INFO NAVELEXSYSCOM FOR PME-119

CINCPAC

COMMANDANT COAST GUARD WASHDC

OSD/PA WASHDC

USIA WASHDC

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 5583

CINCPAC PLEASE PASS COMMANDER ASCHE, OMEGA STATION HAWAII

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, AS, US

SUBJ: POSSIBLE AUSTRALIAN TV PROGRAM ON OMEGA

REF: A) CINCPAC 150320Z AUG 73 (NOTAL)

B) CANBERRA 4556 (NOTAL)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: EMBASSY INFORMED BY CHANNEL 7 TV REPORTER WEBB THAT HE PLANS HOUR-LONG PROGRAM ON OMEGA FOR NEAR FUTURE. PROGRAM WOULD CENTER AROUND FILM FOOTAGE TAKEN OF HAWAII STATION DURING WEBB'S VISIT THERE IN AUGUST AND SOME FILM CLIPS FROM USN TECHNICAL TRAINING FILM ON HOW OMEGA SYSTEM OPERATES. EMBASSY AND DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAVE DISCOURAGED WEBB FROM INVITING COMMANDER ASCHE FROM HAWAII STATION TO PARTICIPATE IN PROGRAM, ALTHOUGH WEBB MAY INVITE ASCHE ON PERSONAL BASIS. OUR ASSESSMENT IS THAT WHILE WEBB'S PROGRAM MAY PRESENT BALANCED VIEW OF OMEGA, IT WILL AGAIN RAISE SUBJECT AS PUBLIC ISSUE IN AUSTRALIA AND MAY HAVE SOME IMPACT UPON PARLIAMENTARY JOINT
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COMMITTEE'S CONSIDERATION WHICH MAY CONCLUDE AT END

OF OCTOBER. NEITHER DFA NOR EMBASSY, HOWEVER, IS IN POSITION TO PREVENT TV PROGRAM FROM TAKING PLACE IF WEBB DECIDES TO GO AHEAD WITH IT. END SUMMARY. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT DEPARTMENT CONCUR WITH EMBASSY AND DFA VIEW THAT COMMANDER ASCHE IF ASKED SHOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN TV PROGRAM ON OMEGA IN AUSTRALIA.

2. AS FORESHADOWED REF A, MELBOURNE TV CHANNEL 7 REPORTER DAN WEBB IS PLANNING PROGRAM FOR SCREENING LATER THIS MONTH ON PROJECT OMEGA. WEBB'S CONCEPT IS TO USE MATERIAL GATHERED DURING HIS VISIT TO OMEGA STATION IN HAWAII IN AUGUST, PLUS SOME FOOTAGE FROM USN "OMEGA LONG-RANGE NAVIGATION SYSTEM - INTRODUCTION" FILM AS BACKGROUND AFTER WHICH HE WOULD INTERVIEW BOTH PRO AND ANTI OMEGA PERSONALITIES IN AUSTRALIA. NAVY FILM ON OMEGA WAS SHOWN TO WEBB AS HE REQUESTED (PARA 2 REF A) AFTER RECEIPT FROM COMMANDER ASCHE EARLY SEPTEMBER. FILM IS NOW BACK IN EMBASSY, ALTHOUGH WEBB APPARENTLY TAPED SOME CLIPS FOR USE ON PROPOSED PROGRAM.

3. WEBB'S CONCEPT OF PROGRAM ALSO INCLUDED THE POSSIBLE INVITATION TO COMMANDER ASCHE TO PARTICIPATE IN TV PROGRAM. AFTER TALKING IT OVER WITH DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN CANBERRA, EMBASSY HAS TOLD WEBB IT BELIEVES IT WOULD BE UNWISE FOR COMMANDER ASCHE TO COME TO AUSTRALIA FOR THIS PURPOSE. OUR ASSESSMENT IS THAT ASCHE'S APPEARANCE AT THIS TIME ON AUSTRALIAN TV WOULD NOT ASSIST EITHER IN PUBLIC OR PARLIAMENTARY UNDERSTANDING OF OMEGA. IN ADDITION, IF PUT ON PROGRAM WITH ONE OR MORE RADICAL ACADEMICS, ASCHE MIGHT BE IN DIFFICULT POSITION TO GET MESSAGE ACROSS. WE HAVE THEREFORE RECOMMENDED TO WEBB THAT HE NOT INVITE COMMANDER ASCHE, ALTHOUGH WEBB MAY STILL PURSUE INVITATION TO COMMANDER ASCHE ON PERSONAL BASIS. EMBASSY REQUESTS WASHINGTON CONCURRENCE THAT HE SHOULD NOT ACCEPT. PUBLIC POSITION COULD BE THAT COMMANDER ASCHE AS MEMBER OF U.S. COAST GUARD IS ENJOINED FROM PARTICIPATING IN PROPOSED TV PROGRAM AS MEMBER OF UNIFORMED SERVICE.

4. EMBASSY BELIEVES, AS REPORTED REF A, WEBB IS
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FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARD OMEGA AND THAT HE WOULD ATTEMPT TO PRESENT A BALANCED PROGRAM. BOTH EMBASSY AND DFA, HOWEVER, WOULD PREFER THAT NO PROGRAM BE SCREENED SINCE IT IS OUR ASSESSMENT THAT CURRENT OMEGA HEARINGS BEFORE PARLIAMENTARY JOINT COMMITTEE ARE GOING WELL AND THAT PROGRAM MIGHT SERVE TO RAISE OMEGA AS PUBLIC ISSUE AGAIN AND MAY HAVE DIRECT EFFECT UPON COMMITTEE'S CONSIDERATION OF SUBJECT. NEITHER DFA

NOR EMBASSY, HOWEVER, IS IN POSITION TO DISCOURAGE WEBB FROM PRESENTING PROGRAM IF HE WISHES TO GO AHEAD.

5. EMBASSY'S ASSESSMENT OF U.S. NAVY FILM NOTED PARA 2 ABOVE IS THAT IS IS FAIRLY TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION OF SYSTEM WHICH MAY CONFUSE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC RATHER THAN ADD TO ITS ENLIGHTENMENT. IN COMBINATION WITH FOOTAGE TAKEN BY WEBB DURING HIS VISIT TO HAWAII STATION AND WITH LIVE INTERVIEWS, IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT PROGRAM MAY ATTRACT CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION. WE ARE INFORMED BY DFA THAT ITS OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENTARY JOINT COMMITTEE HAVE SEEN NAVY FILM, SO ITS PRESENTATION ON TV SHOULD NOT BE AN EMBARRASSMENT TO WORK OF COMMITTEE. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT COPY OF FILM SEEN BY JOINT COMMITTEE AND DFA WAS PROVIDED BY AUSTRALIAN DEPT. OF TRANSPORT.

6. WHILE EMBASSY NOT FULLY INFORMED OF WEBB'S PLANS FOR PROGRAM, WE BELIEVE HE WILL AIM TO HAVE PROGRAM AIRED BEFORE END OF OCTOBER WHEN PARLIAMENTARY JOINT COMMITTEE MAY HAVE CONCLUDED ITS HEARINGS. EMBASSY WILL INFORM DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTS. WE UNDERSTAND PROGRAM FILM, IF CONSIDERED SUCCESSFUL, MAY ALSO BE SHOWN ON TV IN SYDNEY, CANBERRA AND OTHER EASTERN AUSTRALIAN CENTERS.
GREEN

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